



Office of the
Commissioner of
Official Languages

Commissariat
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A victory for Canadian travellers! The Commissioner of Official Languages is satisfied with linguistic amendments proposed for Air Canada

It is with a great deal of satisfaction that the Commissioner of Official Languages, Dr. Dyane Adam, welcomes the federal government's decision to clarify the linguistic obligations of airlines affiliated with Air Canada.

The legislation presented today by the Transport minister, David Collenette, clearly sets out that Air Canada's regional transporters and other future affiliates will be subject to the *Official Languages Act* in regards to services to the public, where there is significant demand. Air Canada, a former Crown corporation, is already subject to all aspects of the Act. The legislation also provides that Canadians may continue to file complaints with the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages if they feel that Air Canada and its affiliates have not met their linguistic obligations.

"This legislation represents important progress for the entire Canadian population in terms of services and security, since it clearly establishes that Air Canada's subsidiaries must offer quality services in both official languages on routes where there is significant demand", declared Dr. Adam. The Commissioner hopes that these new provisions will reinforce and clarify linguistic rights in the airline industry in Canada.

The measures included in the legislation respond in large part to the public position taken by the Commissioner from the beginning of the restructuring process in the airline industry, as well as before the committees of the House of Commons and the Senate that studied the future of this industry in Canada.

Dr. Adam is pleased to see a positive development in this issue that the Office of Commissioner has been following for the last few years. Air Canada has always maintained that its regional carriers are not subject to the *Official Languages Act* and are not required to provide services in both official languages. Following repeated negotiations with the corporation, the Office of the Commissioner made a request in 1997 to have this matter referred to the Federal Court and this issue has not yet been resolved.

As well, year after year, numerous complaints are received at the Office of the Commissioner with respect to Air Canada and, in particular, its regional carriers. These complaints bear witness to the degree of importance that the Canadian public attaches to receiving service in the official language of their choice.

The Commissioner wishes to especially recognize the commitment to linguistic duality shown today by the federal government and the leadership that it is demonstrating in ensuring the protection of the linguistic rights of Canadians in our skies.

Information

Commissioner's Representatives

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